

BIDEFORD RURAL DISTRICT



Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

1919.



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To the Bideford Rural District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT OF
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, 1919.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit to you my Ninth Annual Report dealing with the Public Health and General Conditions of the District during the year. Information as to Housing is also included.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant.

LEONARD B. BETTS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. (Lon.)

Cleverdon House,
Bradworthy, N. Devon.

Annual Report.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF DISTRICT.

The Bideford Rural District covers 53,775 acres and is situated in the North-West corner of Devon. It is bounded on the North by Bideford Bay and on the West by the Atlantic. On the South it adjoins the County of Cornwall and the Holsworthy Rural District, and on the East it is bounded by Northam, Bideford Urban and Torrington districts.

The coastline is very rocky, especially on the West, where the cliffs are high and long, serrated ridges of rock run out into the sea at right angles to the shore.

The air is very pure and bracing, and in clear weather the views from the cliffs from Hartland Point towards Bude on the one hand and Clovelly on the other are magnificent. The scenery all along the coast, with the towering cliffs and little sandy bays, is remarkably fine and attracts many visitors to the district during the summer months.

There is no railway in the district, but there is a regular service of motor chars-à-bancs between Bideford and Clovelly and Hartland.

The roads throughout the district, with the exception of the main road from Bideford to Hartland, are in a very bad state of repair, chiefly owing to heavy lorry traffic.

Population.—At the Census of 1911, the population was given as 6,306. For the year 1919, it is estimated at 6,029 for the purpose of calculating the birth rate, and at 5,788 for the death rate. The difference between these two estimates is accounted for by the death away from home of many of the non-civilian population.

Social Conditions.—The inhabitants are chiefly occupied in farming, cattle-rearing, horse-breeding, etc. Around the coast, notably at Clovelly and Bucks Mills, fishing is carried on. At Clovelly, Bucks, Hartland, Welcombe and other villages on or near the coast, income is derived from letting rooms to summer visitors. There is no occupation carried on in the district that has any special injurious effect on the public health.

VITAL STATISTICS.

Deaths.—There were 72 deaths registered as belonging to the district, as compared with 91 in 1918. Of these 43 were males and 29 females. The civilian deathrate for the year is 12.4 per 1,000 compared with 16.9 for 1918. The largest number of deaths were due to causes incident to old age. Eleven were due to heart disease, and eight to cancer. The deathrate for whole of England and Wales, 13.8.

Births.—There were 93 births during the year, 47 males and 46 females, as compared with 104 in 1918, and 96 in 1917. Of these four were illegitimate. The birthrate for the year is 15.425, compared

with 17.2 in 1918, and 15.5 in 1917. The birthrate for the whole of England and Wales is 18.5.

Infant Mortality.—The number of deaths of children under one year was three, compared with eight in the previous year, and five in 1917. The infant deathrate for the year is 32.25 per 1,000 births, compared with 76.9 in 1918.

Maternity and Child Welfare.—During the year there were two cases of Puerperal Fever notified, one of which proved fatal. Two other deaths occurred from childbirth.

POOR LAW RELIEF.

The total amount of Out Relief paid out for the whole district during the year was £189 5s. 9d. This was distributed among the various parishes as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Buckland Brewer	41	6	6
Clovelly	21	0	0
Hartland	210	11	0
Newton St. Petrock	121	15	3
Parkham	21	17	0
Abbotsham	26	1	6
Alwington	15	0	6
Monkleigh	28	11	0

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE DISTRICT.

Water.—There is no main water supply for the district with the exception of Abbotsham, where some houses are supplied from the main pipe from the Northam Water Company's reservoir at Melbury.

Hartland Town has a storage tank from which the water is conveyed to street standards by pipes.

Clovelly is supplied from a storage tank on the hill, the water being brought to the houses by means of gravitation.

At Bucks Mills there are tanks supplied by springs.

In the other villages and outlying parts of the district the water is obtained from public pumps, shallow wells or springs. There are a great number of private pumps. During the year attention has been given to many private wells and roadside dipping wells in order to protect the water from surface pollution.

Chemical Examination of Water.—Seven samples of water were examined during the year. Five were found to be fit for domestic use. One was polluted and the owner of the cottage was asked to provide a new well. The remaining sample was dirty and the well was ordered to be cleaned out.

Drainage and Sewerage. Clovelly has a main sewer, which discharges into the sea towards the South of the town. In Hartland, Abbotsham, Buckleigh, Buckland Brewer, Parkham, Woolsery, and Bucks, the sewage discharges into septic tanks. There is no regular system of drainage in the outlying parts of the district, the waste water being usually thrown out among the manure from the stables and cowsheds and spread over the fields or run into the roadside water tables.

The larger farms and houses have drains, which are carried to some distance from the house and discharge into open ditches.

Closet Accommodation.—The schools are provided with water or earth closets, which are regularly emptied and kept sanitary and in good order.

In Clovelly village there is a water carriage system, and also in Hartland and Parkham some houses are provided with water closets. In other parts of the district, with the exception of the better class houses, which have water closets with water laid on from private wells, with force pumps, or from rainwater tanks under the roof, there are generally pail closets, and in some cases, privies, which are cleaned out by the householders, the contents being buried. During the year three old privies have been re-constructed into earth closets, and one new earth closet has been built.

Scavenging.—At Clovelly house refuse is collected three times weekly by the public scavenger and placed on a shoot on the side of the cliff.

In Hartland the scavenging is undertaken by a contractor.

In other parts of the district the refuse is put on the fields or gardens or buried.

SANITARY INSPECTIONS OF DISTRICT.

The Sanitary Inspector, Mr. H. D. Dack, reports that during the year there have been :—

- 568 visits to dwelling-houses and other premises.
- 26 houses disinfected.
- 2 schools disinfected.
- 22 notices served on houses and nuisances dangerous to public health.
- 8 Old wells cleaned out and protected.
- 1 New wells sunk.
- 1 New earth closet erected.
- 3 Old privies re-constructed into earth closets.
- 3 New sets of drains laid.
- 8 Old drains reconstructed and repaired.
- 5 Samples of water taken for analysis.
- 6 Houses renovated.
- 12 Houses inspected under Housing Act, 1910.
- 1 Sets of plans for the erection of houses.
- 1 Closing Order served
- 2 Cases of overcrowding.

There are 11 Registered Dairies, 17 Schools, 9 Slaughter Houses, 2 Steam Bakeries, 1 Steam Laundry. Mr. Dack has visited them and reported thereon and attended to the cleaning out of the tanks at Abbotsham, Buckleigh Moor, Buckland Brewer, Hartland, Parkham and Woolsery, and has given attention to the scavenging at Clovelly and Hartland and carried out the Medical Officer's instructions.

Schools.—There are 17 Public Elementary Schools in the district. All are in good sanitary condition and the water supply is satisfactory.

FOOD.

Milk Supply.—There are 11 registered Dairies in the district, all of which have been inspected during the year and are clean and well kept. No case of tuberculous milk has been reported during the year.

Other Foods.—No case of diseased meat has been reported during the year, and the slaughterhouses are all well kept and frequently inspected. The two steam bakehouses in the district are also in good sanitary condition. Neither are underground.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There were 50 cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year, compared with 63 in 1918 and 46 in 1917.

There were nine cases of Scarlet Fever, a few occurring in five different parishes. The disease was mild in character and no deaths occurred.

There were 7 cases of Diphtheria, three of Pneumonia, and 16 of Measles.

Tuberculosis.—Six cases of Tuberculosis were notified, three of the lungs and three of other forms of the disease. Every care is taken with these cases to isolate the patient as far as possible and to prevent other members of the family from contracting the disease.

Influenza.—Was very prevalent in the district in the Spring, the schools at Welcombe, Parkham, and Newton St. Petrock being closed on that account. The epidemic was of a milder type than the one which occurred in the previous Autumn.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

1. **Staff.**—There is an efficient whole time Sanitary Inspector, who carries out his duties with energy and promptitude.

2. —There is no **Hospital Accommodation** for Infectious Diseases in the district. A few beds are placed at the service of Abbotsham parish in the Bideford Town Isolation Hospital.

HOUSING.

There are 1,500 houses in the district, about 1,000 of which are for the labouring class. No new houses are in course of erection; but arrangements have been made for 12 to be built as soon as labour and materials are available and the necessary money raised. The population is estimated, roughly, at 5,800. There is no great shortage of houses in the district. No complaints were made in respect of any houses.

Six defective houses were remedied without closing orders being made. Twelve Orders for repairs were issued. Some of these are in course of repair as ordered by the Council, and the rest will be done as soon as labour and materials are available.

One Closing Order was made. There are no houses unfit for occupation, and no obstructive buildings in the district.

The work of House Inspection has been in abeyance during the year, owing to the shortage of materials for repairing.

RAINFALL.

The total rainfall for the year, registered at Melbury Reservoir, was 52.97 inches, compared with 57.06 inches for the preceding year and 47.165 inches in 1917. There were 200 wet days and 165 dry days. The driest months of the year were July, with 21 dry days, May and October with 19 dry days each, and August with 18 dry days. June and September were also fine months. December was the wettest month of the year, the total fall being 11.32 inches for the month and no dry days occurring.

For this information I am indebted to Mr. Harding, observer at Melbury Reservoir.